REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant has carefully reviewed and considered the Final Office Action (FOA) mailed on May 24, 2011, and the references cited therewith.

Claims 54, 59, 63, and 67 are amended, claims 1-53, 55-58, 60-61, and 65-66 are canceled, and no claims are added; as a result, claims 54, 59, 62-64, and 67-68 are now pending in this application.

Examiner Interview Summary

Applicant thanks Examiner Kathleen Sonnett for the courtesy of a telephone interview on June 27, 2011. Applicant and Examiner Sonnett appeared to reach agreement that independent claims 59, 63, and 67 and the remarks, as presented herein, would overcome the rejections presented in the present FOA. Applicant thanks Examiner Sonnett for her time and consideration.

Claim Objections

Claims 54, 59, and 67 were objected to because of the following informalities: Claim 54: insert –a-- between "where" and "blood" in line 3; Claim 59: insert –portion-- after "second distal stent" in line 7; Claim 67: "at least one" should read "a" in line 8 since this limitation is only referring to the distal orifice of one of the intermediate stent portions and each distal orifice receives only one second stent and, also, lines 9 and 10 should read "the second stent" and "the distal orifice".

Applicant has amended claims 54, 59, and 67 to overcome the objections thereto. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the objections to claims 54, 59, and 67.

§ 103 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 59, 63-64, and 67-68 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 5,575,817) in view of Lassiter,

et al. (U.S. Patent No. 1,417,393). Applicant respectfully traverses the rejection as follows.

Applicant notes that section 5 of the present FOA appears to acknowledge that the Martin reference does not teach that a second distal stent portion comprises a distal orifice at a distal end of a tapering portion which when expanded serves to receive a male engaging portion having a frustoconical configuration of an additional stent completely within a female engaging portion of the distal orifice. However, section 6 appears to state that the Lassiter reference teaches the same. Insofar as the rejection applies to the claims of the present application, as currently amended, Applicant respectfully disagrees for at least the following reasons.

The Lassiter reference, for instance, appears to teach, as illustrated in Figures 11, 12, and 15 and described in column 3, lines 93-108:

> The shoulders 33 of the mandrel 19 limit the insertion of the pipe ends 34 to the exact degree while the surfaces 31 fit within and support the pipe ends adjacent their extremities during the shaping and welding action. The extremity of each **pipe end** is initially, or by the spreading action of portion 32 of the mandrel leg entering the same, enlarged or expanded, as at 35, and fits around the mandrel surface 32, thus **providing a shoulder** 36, and the surfaces 26 of the dies contact the extremities of the **legs**, as at 37, about the body of the pipe beyond said shoulder 36, **forming a shoulder portion** 38 in the leg which contacts with and **lies beyond the shoulder** 36.

Accordingly, Applicant respectfully submits that, as shown in Figure 11 of the Lassiter reference, the shoulders 33 of the mandrel 19 limit the insertion of the pipe ends 34 to the exact degree while the surfaces 31 fit within and support the **pipe ends** adjacent their extremities during the shaping and welding action and the extremity of each **pipe end** is initially, or by the spreading action of portion 32 of the mandrel leg entering the same, enlarged or expanded, as at 35, and fits around the mandrel surface 32, thus **providing a shoulder** 36.

That is, the shoulder of the mandrel appears to expand the extremity of the pipe end during the shaping and welding action to provide the shoulder to the pipe end, where on each side of the shoulder (which the Examiner appears to equate to a

frustoconical configuration, although Applicant does not admit to same) the pipe end continues for a distance in a straight tubular configuration. In particular, the pipe end continues for a distance in a straight tubular configuration on a distal side of the shoulder to be inserted into the leg, as shown in Figure 15.

In addition, Applicant respectfully submits that, as shown in Figures 12 and 15, the surfaces 26 of the dies contact the extremities of the legs, as at 37, about the body of the pipe beyond the shoulder 36, **forming a shoulder portion** 38 in the leg which contacts with and **lies beyond the shoulder** 36.

That is, the surfaces of the dies appear to compress the extremities of the legs from an original configuration about the body of the pipe beyond a shoulder of the pipe, thereby **forming a shoulder portion** in the leg which contacts with and **lies beyond the shoulder of the pipe**. As shown in Figure 15, the leg appears to include a straight tubular configuration on a distal side of the shoulder (which the Examiner appears to equate to a tapering portion, although Applicant does not admit to same) that continues for a distance outside the pipe.

Further, the Lassiter reference appears to teach in column 3, lines 108-113:

> **By this construction** a mechanical interlock between the leg and pipe is provided which reinforces the weld and tends to prevent possible separation of the parts under strains and thus adds to the security of the connection.

Hence, Applicant respectfully submits that the Lassiter reference does not teach a bifurcated stent having a bifurcated proximal stent portion adapted to be disposed within said blood vessel, a first distal stent portion adapted to extend across the bifurcation into one of the branched vessels, and a second distal stent portion shorter than the first distal stent portion and configured to be disposed entirely within the blood vessel, where the second distal stent portion comprises a distal orifice at a distal end of a tapering portion which when in an expanded configuration serves to receive a male engaging portion having a frustoconical configuration of an additional stent completely within a female engaging portion of the distal orifice, where the frustoconical configuration terminates at an end of the

additional stent and the tapering portion terminates at the distal end of the second distal stent portion and where the distal orifice remains in the expanded configuration after receiving the male engaging portion.

In contrast, Applicant's independent claim 59, as currently amended, presently recites in part:

> a bifurcated stent having a bifurcated proximal stent portion adapted to be disposed within said blood vessel, a first distal stent portion adapted to extend across the bifurcation into one of the branched vessels, and a second distal stent portion shorter than said first distal stent portion and configured to be disposed entirely within said blood vessel, wherein the second distal stent portion comprises a distal orifice at a distal end of a tapering portion which when in an expanded configuration serves to receive a male engaging portion having a frustoconical configuration of an additional stent completely within a female engaging portion of the distal orifice, wherein the frustoconical configuration terminates at an end of the additional stent and the tapering portion terminates at the distal end of the second distal stent portion and wherein the distal orifice remains in the expanded configuration after receiving the male engaging portion;

Independent claim 63, as currently amended, presently recites in part:

> placing in the vessel a first bifurcated stent having at least one leg disposed entirely within the vessel, the bifurcated stent also having at least one distal orifice at a distal end of a tapering portion of the at least one leg which when in an expanded configuration serves to receive a male engaging portion having a frustoconical configuration of a second stent completely within a female engaging portion of the distal orifice, wherein the frustoconical configuration terminates at an end of the additional stent and the tapering portion terminates at the distal end of the second distal stent portion and wherein the distal orifice remains in the expanded configuration after receiving the male engaging portion;

In addition, independent claim 67, as currently amended, presently recites in part:

> a first bifurcated stent comprising a proximal stent portion and two intermediate stent portions extending distally relative to said assembly bifurcation, wherein at least one of the intermediate stent portions has a distal orifice at a distal end of a tapering portion which

when in an expanded configuration serves to receive a male engaging portion having a frustoconical configuration of a second stent completely within a female engaging portion of the distal orifice, wherein the frustoconical configuration terminates at an end of the additional stent and the tapering portion terminates at the distal end of the second distal stent portion and wherein the distal orifice remains in the expanded configuration after receiving the male engaging portion;

As such, Applicant respectfully submits that the Martin reference and the Lassiter reference, individually or in combination, do not teach, suggest, or render obvious each and every element and limitation of Applicant's independent claims 59, 63, and 67, as currently amended. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the § 103 rejection of independent claims 59, 63, and 67, as currently amended, as well as those claims that depend therefrom.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 54 and 62 were objected to for a minor typographical error in claim 54 but otherwise are deemed allowable.

Applicant has amended independent claim 54 to overcome the objection thereto. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to claims 54 and 62.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's below listed attorney at 612-236-0126 to facilitate prosecution of this matter.

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR §1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being electronically filed with the United States Patent and Trademark Office on this 30th day of June, 2011.

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